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ABSTRACT

Upon completion of a collaboratively generated plan for curriculum development in the state of Victoria, Australia, in the early 1980s, the state's education ministry appointed a committee to create and carry out a strategy for implementing the newly developed policies. The committee consisted of representatives from the state's education department, the state board of education, and the Victorian Institute of Secondary Education. The strategy that the committee devised, called Curriculum Victoria, comprised the following elements: distribution of a set of curriculum frameworks that local schools could use as bases for planning; distribution of a set of brief pamphlets and bibliographies on major issues addressed in the ministerial plan; distribution of a set of papers on educational issues and strategies including access to education, individual differences, learning and learning styles, teaching strategies, curriculum negotiation, and program assessment; the dissemination of information and the encouragement of information exchange; and the encouragement of professional development. This paper concludes with a review of some positive and negative aspects of the implementation effort (which was still in process as of the presentation of the paper) and some external factors affecting that effort. (PGD)

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A STATE-WIDE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM TO SUPPORT GOVERNMENT POLICY INITIATIVES IN EDUCATION

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EA 018 646

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
American Educational Research Association,
San Francisco, April, 1986

A STATE-WIDE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM TO SUPPORT GOVERNMENT POLICY INITIATIVES IN EDUCATION

BACKGROUND:

Over the past few years the number of groups seeking to influence the State Minister of Education's decisions on educational matters has increased significantly. Prior to that time the Education Department was virtually the sole adviser (Attachment 1). At the Minister's request the State Board of Education was asked to develop Ministerial Paper No. 6. The development process was a consultative one involving close collaboration with the Education Department and the Victorian Institute of Secondary Education and considerable opportunity for input from the wider community.

CONTENTS:

The major thrusts of Ministerial Paper No. 6 may be summed up as follows:

1. Schooling for living
2. Shared responsibility
3. Democratic decision making
4. Access for all
5. Success for all
6. Assessment which supports learning
7. A positive view of learning
8. Variety in learning
9. Relating learning to action
10. Key areas of learning.

IMPLEMENTATION: THE BEGINNINGS

As the Ministerial Paper was nearing completion, senior administrators of the Education Department, the State Board of Education and the Victorian Institute of Secondary Education met and recommended to the Minister that a Curriculum Implementation Committee be established comprising representatives of the three organisations. The purpose of the Committee was to develop and carry out an implementation strategy. The Minister accepted the recommendation. In retrospect this Committee should have been set up earlier and the implementation strategy more clearly developed.

IMPLEMENTATION: THE CHALLENGE

The challenge faced by the Curriculum Implementation Committee was how to achieve awareness, acceptance and adoption of the broad principles embodied in the Paper in a system of 2,108 schools, 564,984 students and 46,107 teachers within a context of local school responsibility for curriculum decisions.

While the consultative process by which the Paper was developed had gone some way to ensuring awareness and acceptance, and the Paper itself reflected the best of what was already happening in schools, it was clear that the challenge was indeed formidable.

The strategy for implementation would need to embody the following elements:

- ensure state wide impact;
- develop ways of working with regions and with schools in a partnership process;
- empower parents, students and other community members through School Councils to contribute to curriculum policy decisions.

IMPLEMENTATION: THE STRATEGY

The Curriculum Implementation Committee eventually agreed upon a multifaceted strategy, "Curriculum Victoria", comprising the following elements:

CURRICULUM VICTORIA

IMPLEMENTATION OF MINISTERIAL PAPER NUMBER 6

A. CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS	B. PAMPHLETS AND BIBLIOGRAPHIES	C. PAPERS ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES AND STRATEGIES	D. INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND DISSEMINATION	E. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- School curriculum and organisation - Nine curriculum areas	- Brief summaries and selected bibliographies on significant aspects of Ministerial Paper No. 6	- Discussion papers exploring major themes of significance in Ministerial Paper No. 6	- Ideas booklets - Ed Line - Exemplary programs in schools	- Regional state-wide development activities

A chart setting out this information was developed and distributed throughout the system in September, 1985.

A. Curriculum Frameworks

The Curriculum Frameworks was the responsibility of the Education Department. The next paper is specifically concerned with this project.

B. Pamphlets and Bibliographies

The pamphlets, each a single A4 size sheet, explain in simple terms major issues addressed in the Ministerial Paper.

Topics include

- An introduction to Ministerial Paper No. 6
- Ways of grouping students
- Assessment
- Reporting
- Areas of learning
- Approaches to teaching and learning
- The inclusive curriculum
- Student participation
- Parent participation

The State Board of Education has been responsible for the development of these sets of resources which are designed to help make the ideas of the Ministerial Paper accessible to school communities.

The annotated bibliographies list documents of assistance to schools in the areas of

- Integration
- Parent participation
- Assessment and reporting
- School organisation
- Negotiating the curriculum
- Ways of grouping students
- Teaching languages other than English
- The education of girls.

C. Papers on Educational Issues and Strategies

A series of papers on educational issues and strategies were proposed to provide school communities and others with practical suggestions and promote more informed discussion on major themes in the Ministerial Paper. Papers on six major themes are completed. The three organisations were responsible for their development.

° Access and Success)	
° Individual Differences)	Curriculum Branch,
° Learning and Learning Styles)	Education Department
° Teaching Strategies)	
° Negotiating the Curriculum	State Board of Education
° Assessment and Reporting	Victorian Institute of Secondary Education

These papers range from 20pp - 48pp in length.
A kit comprising items in Sections B and C is being published in April 1986.
A project team within the Ministry of Education was responsible for co-ordinating the production of the kit.

D. Information Exchange and Dissemination

A sharing of ideas and drawing on exemplars within the system was to be encouraged. The series of booklets Alternatives in School Organisation and the book Destination: Decisions, to assist schools in decision making, formed part of the contribution.

A computerised data base is being built up to provide ready access to information.

E. Professional Development

Professional development pervades all the sections A - D, but was kept separate for emphasis.

Professional development activities at the regional level were encouraged by providing each region with several thousand dollars to develop their own regional activities.

ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

(1) Positive aspects of the implementation process to date have included:

- the very positive response to the Curriculum Victoria charts, which helped schools and regional staff to see where various activities and developments fitted in the overall scheme
- the degree of momentum generated in particular regions and schools: a crucial factor in this was the injection of modest funding to each region for MP6 implementation, which led to some innovative thinking about how best to utilise it
- two in-service days conducted centrally for key staff of regions which were very successful, particularly in the sharing of what had already been achieved in particular regions and schools - a Curriculum Victoria resource package was provided for all participants
- formal visits by Senior Education Department staff to the regions to explain the role of the Curriculum Implementation Committee vis-a-vis Regional staff.

(2) Difficulties which have had to be faced:

- the sheer magnitude of the exercise and the management of it
- the inevitably slow pace of the implementation process as a result of its scope, the number of organisations and people involved and the commitment to collaborative decision making
- the failure to recognise the degree of resourcing required for such an enterprise

- uncertainty among teachers and School Councils as to the status of these curriculum 'guidelines' i.e. how prescriptive are they?

- how to facilitate effective communication and sharing of ideas and concerns both within and between all levels of the system.

(3) Changing contextual factors have also affected the implementation process:

- the release of the interim and final reports of the Ministerial Review of Post Compulsory Schooling which were perceived as more controversial and therefore newsworthy. This had the effect of "stealing the thunder" of the Curriculum Victoria initiatives and further confused the issue regarding responsibility for curriculum at Years 11 and 12.

- the tight economic climate and associated budgetary constraints resulting in limited resourcing of the implementation process.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

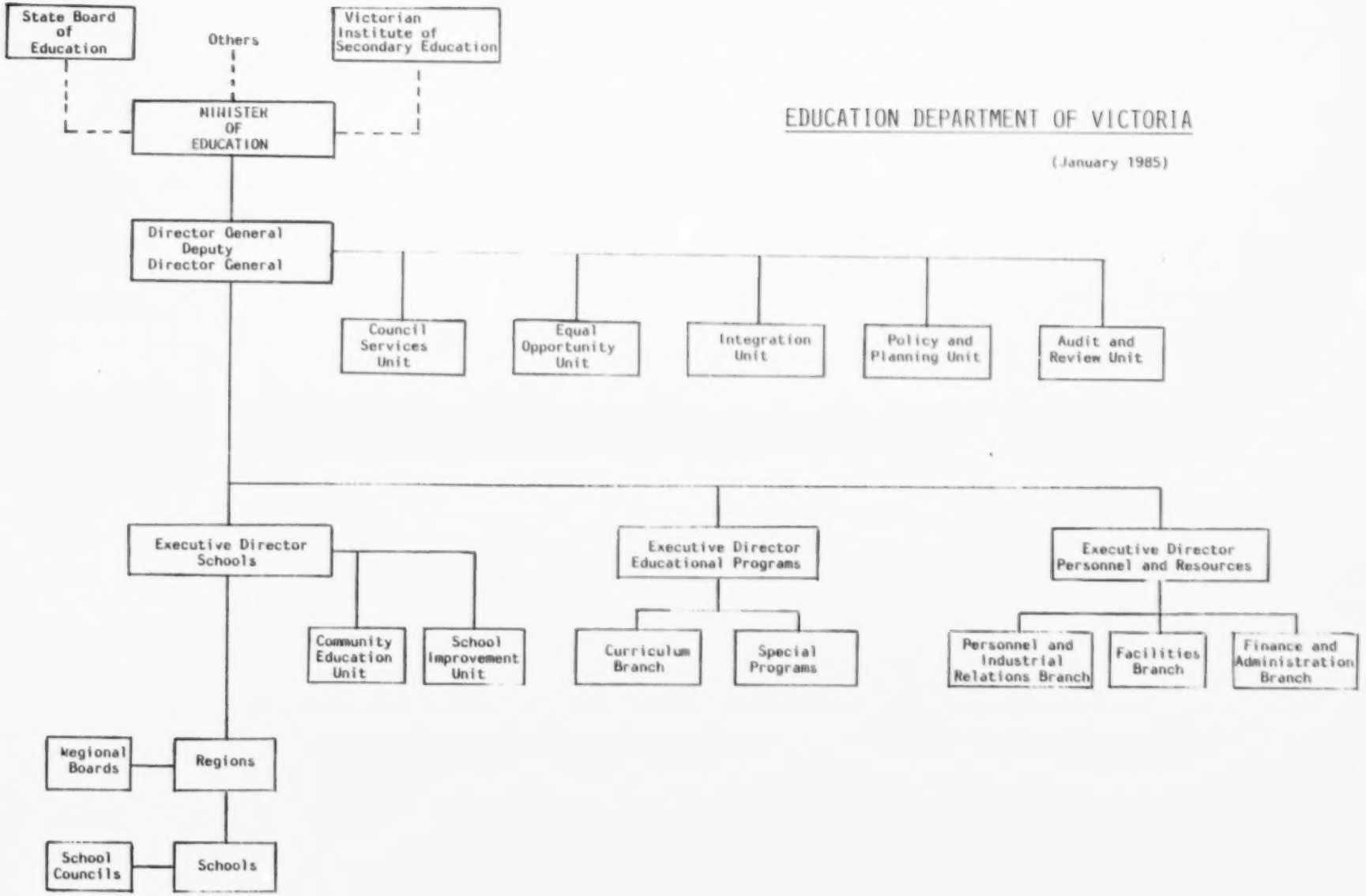
Despite the difficulties and changing conditions associated with the implemenation process the situation at present is that:

- the pamphlets, bibliographies and issues papers have recently been distributed to schools

- there is to be a major State-wide Conference in May, to be held at La Trobe University, at which schools and other bodies will report on many aspects of progress towards the implementation by schools of the goals of Ministerial Paper No. 6

- regions have been made further modest grants to assist them in their implementation efforts.

This symposium paper has described the scope of curriculum initiatives in Victoria, which can truly be seen as a State in action. It is also a State in change. In November 1985 the Minister announced the formation of the Ministry of Education. The former Education Department is now the Ministry of Education (Schools Division) and the other two advisory bodies, the State Board of Education and the Victorian Institute of Secondary Education, have now been brought into the Ministry.



Attachment 1

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